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## FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**Axel M. Oaks Takacs**

A little over two weeks after the last Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Antonio, I wrote the introduction to our previous rolling submissions issue (No. 40). Since then, two special issues have been published. Issue 41, *The Art of Interfaith: A Festschrift in Honor of Lucinda Mosher*, had the depth, breadth, and length of two issues. Issue 42, *Liberation Theologies in Comparative Perspective*, contained select articles from the 19th Annual Boston College Engaging Particularities Conference. I now pen this introduction several weeks before many of our friends, colleagues, readers, and authors will assemble once again, this time in San Diego, for the Annual Meeting of the AAR and the Annual Gathering of the Association for Interreligious/Interfaith Studies.<sup>1</sup>

Issue 43 comprises four articles, two book review essays, and five book reviews.

Albert Frolov, in “Searching for ‘the’ Method: A Lonerganian Critique of Oliver Freiberger’s Comparative Method,” compares Bernard Lonergan’s “Transcendental Method,” which emphasizes intentionality and existential commitment, with Oliver Freiberger’s focus on redescription and scholarly neutrality in comparative religious studies. It argues that Lonergan’s approach better accounts for scholars’ inherent orientation toward values, while Freiberger’s method remains valuable for its descriptive rigor but limited in scope. Frolov proposes a tentative framework integrating both approaches to bridge the gap between comparative religious studies and theology.

From theoretical and methodological concerns, the issue moves to an exercise in comparison. In “Categorizing Representative Nondualisms,” David H. Nikkel categorizes Asian and Western nondualisms based on six distinctions. The essay argues that East Asian religions like Daoism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Ruism (Confucianism) should be classified as

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1 <https://www.aiistudies.org/2024-san-diego>

transpersonal pantheisms, despite limited previous discussion on this topic. The article concludes by proposing a pantheism that incorporates both personal and transpersonal elements, informed by current scientific understanding.

“Boko Haram: A Just Peace Analysis and Paths Forward,” by co-authors Mary Lilian Akhere Ehidiamben, Sami Basha, Eli McCarthy, and Maureen O’Connell, analyzes the conflict with Boko Haram in Nigeria through a just peace framework and explores transformative paths forward. It examines the social context and root causes of Boko Haram, evaluates current responses, and explores how these align with just peace principles. The essay suggests innovative approaches around interreligious relations, strategic nonviolent resistance, restorative justice, and economic justice to support local mechanisms for conflict transformation.

In “Religious, Social, Cultural Significance of the Usage of *Orhue* (Chalk) at Birth in Edo: Implications for the Practice of Christianity,” contextual theologian Michael Musa Oboh argues that, while some Christians reject *orhue* as a fetish (in large part on account of colonial and modern influences), it serves as a means of appreciating God, fostering social unity, and celebrating cultural events. Through contextual theology, the essay concludes that incorporating *orhue* into Christian practice enhances social, cultural, and religious expression, promoting inculturation and decolonization within Christianity.

These four articles are followed by two book review essays. In “Religious Diversity, Secularization, and Indifference,” Hans Gustafson offers an exploration of Ryan T. Cargun’s *Beyond Doubt: The Secularization of Society*. This is followed by my in-depth analysis of Caner Dagli’s *Metaphysical Institutions: Islam & the Modern Project* in a review essay entitled, “Returning to the Central Question of the Humanities: What Does It Mean to be Human and to Share Human Consciousness?”

The issue closes with five book reviews:

- *Everyday Wisdom: Interreligious Studies in a Pluralistic World*, by Hans Gustafson (reviewed by Matthew Maruggi)
- *Interreligious Studies: An Introduction*, by Rachel S. Mikva (reviewed by the Rev. Dr. C. Denise Yarbrough)
- *Judging Jewish Identity in the United States*, by Annalise E. Glauz-Todrank (reviewed by Dennis J. Wieboldt III)

- *Homegrown Hate: Why White Nationalists and Militant Islamists Are Waging War Against the United States*, by Sara Kamali (reviewed by Hannah Thorpe)
- *Multireligious Reflections on Friendship: Becoming Ourselves in Community*, edited by Anne-Marie Ellithorpe, Laura Duhan-Kaplan, and Hussam S. Timani (reviewed by Thomas W. Goodhue)

As usual, I remain grateful to our Senior Editor, Lucinda Mosher, for her work copyediting this issue and editing our book reviews.

Finally, our readers will notice that our journal has a new layout. The design and production of this new layout was made possible by the expertise and experience of our new Research Fellow from Boston University School of Theology, Sze-Long Aaron Wong. Aaron is a Ph.D. candidate in History and Hermeneutics with a concentration in Liturgical Studies. His research interests include East Syrian Christian liturgical practices in medieval China, 19th-century Christian families in Guangdong, and worship theologies of contemporary Chinese immigrant communities in North America. His dissertation is a multi-sited ethnography in Hong Kong and North America of Cantonese Christian musical practices on and beyond Sundays to examine the bounds of ‘authentic’ liturgical practices and normative liturgical theology. I and the rest of the editorial and publishing staff are grateful to have him on our team.

I hope you enjoy this issue and find it replete with intellectual and affective insights. Thank you for your continued support and interest in the *Journal of Interreligious Studies*.

Axel M. Oaks Takacs, Th.D.  
Editor-in-Chief  
*Journal of Interreligious Studies*